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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9836

INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY

RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 0118

RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY PRIORITY

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RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0928

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/26/2017

TAGS: KDEM PGOV PREL IR VE

SUBJECT: CHAVEZ AND AHMADINEJAD: PROUD TO BE BROTHERS IN
THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPERIALISM

REF: A. LA PAZ 2626

1B. CARACAS 0091

Classified By: Economic Counselor Andrew Bowen for reason 1.4(b).

11. (U) On the evening of September 27, 2007 Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited President Chavez at the Miraflores, Presidential Palace. Arriving in Caracas from La Paz, Bolivia, in an aircraft provided by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (BRV), Ahmadinejad received full formal honors and spoke privately with Chavez during the 2 hours and 30 minute visit. Publicly, Chavez and Ahmadinejad affirmed their "united fight against imperialism," pledged their "support to their "brother President Evo Morales who is in the vanguard in the fight for fundamental change in Latin America," and stated that "imperialism has no option but to respect the will of the people or face defeat." Ahmadinejad reiterated that he and Chavez "were two revolutionary brothers who would always be together." Chavez and Ahmadinejad signed three cooperation agreements pledging to develop petrochemical, agricultural processing, and auto parts manufacturing plants. Chavez made no mention of Iran's nuclear program, which he had defended as recently as September 23. In a gesture of solidarity, during the signing ceremony, Chavez switched the Iranian flag to his side of the table.

12. (C) Caracas was Ahmadinejad's second stop after his departure from the 62nd United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York. The Iranian President traveled commercially to Santa Cruz, Bolivia, then flew to La Paz on a BRV supplied aircraft, and after a meeting with President Morales (reftel A), used the same aircraft to fly to Caracas.

Sensitive sources indicate that while in Bolivia, Ahmadinejad and his party traveled in security vehicles provided by the BRV.

13. (C) Comment: Not surprisingly given the lack of advance notice and short duration of the Ahmadinejad visit, little of substance was announced during his layover in Caracas. On the other hand the entire formal reception was carried on local television which suggests Chavez' interest in underscoring publicly his determination to build his relationship with Iran. The symbolic meeting offered a temporary distraction from Chavez' proposed Constitutional reforms. This is Ahmadinejad's third visit to Venezuela since becoming President in 2005. Ahmadinejad's most recent visit was January 13, 2007 (reftel B).

DUDDY